News Release

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LEAK NOW STOPPED IN MALAD AREA DAM

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State safety of dams engineers say the leak in a Malad area dam has been stopped after the water level in the reservoir was lowered below a 12-inch hole in the earthen dam, the Department of Water Resources said today.

Intentional release of water through the dam's outlet pipe has greatly reduced now that the water level is below the leak. The surface of the 41-acre reservoir was lowered more than 15 feet behind the 39-feet-high dam. About one-third of the water in the 630-acre-feet reservoir was saved for irrigation use during the coming summer months, officials said.

Officials from the Malad Valley Irrigation Company, which owns the dam, now will determine exactly what course of action to take. IDWR officials say the remaining water in the reservoir will be used for irrigation this summer and the state will not let the Company refill the reservoir unless the dam is permanently repaired.

Water had been leaking through the 85-year old Saint John dam at a rate of about 750 gallons per minute for almost a week. IDWR engineers were concerned that the leak could internally erode the dam causing it to fail.

Water moving through the upstream hole in the dam made its way out through the toe of the dam. In the process the moving water eroded a pathway completely through the dam and actually caused a small whirlpool in the water just above the leak.

That posed the real possibility that the hole would enlarge and water flowing through the interior of the dam would eventually completely wash out the inside of the embankment. That meant it became a race by IDWR engineers to lower the reservoir water level below the hole. Officials released water from the reservoir at nearly 25 million gallons per day, the channel capacity of the creek below the structure, to draw down the water level.

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